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The Bell Recipe File

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Home Economics Venture Upon "India's Coral Strand"

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IMAGINE, if you can, how it would seem to be teaching Home Economics in India, filling in your odd moments by managing a palace or two—or three—for the Maharajah and otherwise making yourself generally useful about the place. No danger of boredom in a job like that!

That is quite the impression I had when I heard Mrs. Ann Gilchrist Strong tell about her four years at Baroda, India. She went there to organize home economics in teacher training colleges and high schools, and while she was about it, as I suggested, she did several other little things during her leisure time.

Mrs. Strong is an American woman, formerly dean of home economics in the University of Cincinnati. Following her work in India she went on to New Zealand, where she is at present dean of home science in the University of Otago, one of the affiliated colleges of the University of New Zealand. Coming back to the United States on leave of absence this fall, she spent a few days in Ames on her way east.

But to go back to this amazing piece of work she did in India. The Maharajah, the Gaekwar or ruler, being an extraordinarily progressive soul, decided to employ a woman to reorganize his palaces and train his servants. In order, I suppose, to make it a full-time position, she was to come out under the British department of education and organize home economics in the schools as well as train institutional managers for the Gaekwar. The position was at first offered to an English woman, who refused it, evidently feeling that she would be serving as a sort of upper housekeeper and that she would thereby lose caste. Mrs. Strong, on the contrary, welcomed the opportunity to get into the schools, and entered whole-heartedly into her unique position in charge of just about everything pertaining to the palaces and guest houses—"everything," she says, "except the household gods."

Her first big task in organizing home economics was to train teachers, who, after three years of such preparation, would be placed in charge of departments formerly allotted to her.

And listen to this—these students preparing to teach home economics were mostly men! According to Mrs. Strong, they were really as capable as could be. She began with eight men and two women, all graduates of the University of Bombay.

Her courses included almost everything relating to home economics, with particular emphasis upon economic and social phases and very little of the technical and scientific. Naturally, it all had to be modified to fit "local conditions." For example, she, being an "outcast," was not permitted to touch the food, but she got around that very tactfully by having her students do it for her. And, since the Indian peoples have their own hard and fast customs, not to mention their cherished recipes and utensils, she must first, before she could train her students, familiarize herself with it all.

Ever try cooking an a mud stove? That was one thing. Then there were the intricacies of Indian diet—the prevalence of dried foods—the method of cooking everything, milk and butter included, by boiling, and boiling some more. Alas, the poor vitamine!

For every conceivable purpose she had to prepare a course of study—here for a group of army officers, there a course of training for the Maharajah's dressing boy.

That brings us back to the palaces. They had to be redecorated and refurnished so the first year she spent in eliminating things already there. There are three classes of palaces. Furnishings discarded as unsuitable for the first class would do very well for the second class, while the third class would be all dressed up in the cast-offs from the second class. After that, they simply had a sale. (I have no doubt that shortly afterward the secondhand man did a thriving business, with the humbler classes eager to boast of owning a piece of genuine palace furniture.)

Along with the work of redecorating the palaces went the reorganization of work for greater convenience and facility to the servants. For one thing, she shortened their hours of work from twelve to eight hours a day. In making out her time schedules she had all sorts of difficulties, for the servants were fixed in their habits and hard to change. Her plan here was to train intermediary persons who in turn took groups of servants to train. She had been warned that in undertaking this work she would be treated as a coolie, but never in her experience, she says, did she find it true. Instead, she met kindness and appreciation from all quarters. In addition to improving the lot of the servants, she made every effort to instill in them a sense of loyalty to the Maharajah and of responsibility for his welfare.

"India is a land of leisure," said Mrs. Strong, "yet when they finally make up their minds to do a thing, they want to do it immediately!" As an illustration she told of a proposed visit from the viceroy. Known of months in advance, not a plan was made for his entertainment until within two weeks of his coming. Then most elaborate preparations were begun. She was called to Calcutta, a five days' journey, to prepare the palace, and everything was ready on time, even though it was past midnight before the great day when she, assisted by the general of the army, finished making the beds for his lordship's party!

But there are advantages, Mrs. Strong maintains, in the unhurried serenity of the eastern civilization—the poise that finds its opposite in the discordant haste after heaven knows what—that impressed her sharply when she returned to her own shores. "You don't seem so hurried here in the middle west. Serenity and poise come from a knowledge of superiority—an abundant self-respect. The English and the East Indians have it. Keep your poise—take time to be polite—don't let yourself be rushed to the point where you are not the best of which you are capable."

Somehow, I wondered how one could do all those things in four years and still be able to speak of leisureliness. But as I watched Mrs. Strong, I felt that I knew how it was—that calmness and poise are qualities of mind and she had been able to do great things because she did have them.

The Bell Recipe File

By OPAL WIND

LET US introduce the new recipe file copyrighted by Viola M. Bell, of the home economics division of Iowa State College. It is really a very clever scheme of filing recipes. The usually disorganized group of cards found under the titles in the recipe file is systematized in such a way that one's temper is not lost, nor the desire to use the elusive recipe before it can be discovered lurking in some corner.

This box when opened appears to be much the same as any recipe file—cards filed under the usual title cards of beverages, breads, cakes, etc., alphabetically arranged. With that, however, the analogy ceases. Upon each title card is an index, alphabetically arranged, to the cards filed under that head and the number of the card is given. In looking for gold cake, a glance at the card shows immediately that it is found on card nine under cakes. The recipes on the cards are printed, giving the ingredients, method of procedure and number of servings.

The recipes themselves are those used by Miss Bell during her five years at Iowa State College, in the course "Technique of Food Preparation." They may be purchased complete at the Student Supply Store, Ames, Iowa, at $2.00 a box.

This new box displays an excellent system that is not limited inasmuch as there are extra title cards and on these title cards are places for adding other recipes.

Until one has used a recipe file its efficiency may be questioned, but the new Bell Recipe File can be found only most satisfactory and useful.